

This Sunday's Readings – the 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time – What does it mean to be a disciple? This question is answered in all of today's readings, but especially in the first reading from Jeremiah and the Gospel. The first reading is from the Book of Jeremiah, who was born around 650 BC and died sometime shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587 BC. He preached in Jerusalem, the capital, and tried to keep the kings and the people faithful to God. As Isaiah prophesied the life of the Messiah, Jeremiah lived it. Remember last week's Gospel reading from Matthew when Jesus asks His disciples "Who do people say that the Son of Man is" and one of the answers was Jeremiah? There was a reason for that. The lives of Jesus and Jeremiah were similar in that both were persecuted for what they preached and believed and both were eventually killed by their countrymen. In this reading, Jeremiah recounts the trials and tribulations of being a prophet (disciple). He is angry with God and he lets Him know it. Yet the fire within him cannot be quenched as he states – "it becomes like fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones". He continues his mission, right up to his death in Egypt around 580 BC. The Gospel reading from Matthew is really in three parts – the first prediction of His Passion, the dialogue with Peter, and the meaning of discipleship. Again Matthew used Mark 8:31-37 as the source for this reading but with some modifications. In the first part, Jesus tells his disciples of his impending suffering and death at the hands of "the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes". Note the term "from that time on". This is the first of three Passion predictions in Matthew. In the second part, we have the dialogue between Jesus and Peter. Peter is greatly disturbed by this prediction and protests to Jesus. Jesus in turn refers to Peter as Satan. As Fr. Roger Karban in his weekly scripture column states "We must remember that originally "Satan" wasn't the devil's name. It was a word used to describe an obstacle in someone's path, something which could turn people away from their intended goal". Remember what Jesus said to Peter – "you are an obstacle to me". Jesus was on a mission from God that would result in His death and resurrection and Peter was an "obstacle" to that mission. Poor Peter! Last week he was the "rock" and given the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven by Jesus. This week he is rebuked by Jesus as an "obstacle" to His mission. In the third part, Jesus defines what it is to be a disciple – not an easy life to follow. In order to follow Jesus, we must detach ourselves from the material world and replace our lives with Jesus. For as Jesus said – "What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life". Jesus is the ultimate disciple who gives up His life for all of us. Let us not forget that we are all disciples in Christ through our Baptism.

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